

## Married by Accident

A Man Wins a Wife by Getting into the Wrong House.

By REGINALD D. HAVEN

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On — street is a block of ten houses, every house exactly like every other house. I once lived in one of these houses, and I never went home but I ran a risk of getting into the wrong house.

In the fourth house was a young lady whose appearance I especially admired. I considered her very pretty, and she was certainly very stylish.

"Now, that's just the girl I would like for a wife," I used to say when I saw her going into or coming out of her home.

One afternoon I went home, and, finding the front door ajar, I walked in, put my hat and overcoat in the hall closet and went upstairs to a sitting room on the second floor. The room was shut in by brick walls, and I seldom sat there without turning on the light. Being tired, I threw myself into an easy chair and, closing my eyes, sat thinking on a matter of business that had occurred during the day. Presently, hearing a footstep and looking up, I saw a woman's figure standing in the doorway. There was not enough light to distinguish who she was, but I was not long kept in ignorance. She pressed a button beside the door, and a bright electric light showed me the girl who lived two doors from me.

"How is this?" I stammered. "Have I got into the wrong house?" "I expect you have," replied the girl. "Pardon me, I assure you I had no idea—I'm very careless."

At that moment I heard the front door close. The girl heard it, too, and changed countenance.

"Good gracious, my aunt!" she exclaimed.

"Well?" "It is very unfortunate your being here. She is a very suspicious woman."

"I see. It would grieve me terribly to have her think"—

"Dear me, she's coming up here!"

"Can I get out without meeting her?"

"No. Go in there."

"She shut me up in a large closet, and the next minute I heard the harsh voice of an old woman in the adjoining room."

"Lois," she said severely, "that young man you admire so much who lives in this block is in this house. I was sitting in Mrs. Deacon's window, next door, and saw him come up and walk in at the front door. What are you doing in this room with all this light turned on?"

"Why, Aunt Jane, you must be mistaken."

"Mistaken! Do you think I haven't eyes? Oh, heavens, Lois! Can it be possible that you are—a wicked, bad girl? Upon my word, I believe you are hiding a lover. I'm going to have a look."

She made for the only place in the room possible for concealment—the closet—and had her hand on the door-knob when I heard a slight scuffle, and the young lady said:

"Aunt Jane, before you open that door I wish to say something to you. I have been deceiving you. I have been wooed and won clandestinely by the young man you have referred to. He is in that closet."

I must hasten to protect the honor of one I had compromised by my stupidity. I flung open the door, put my arm around the girl who had been driven to this falsehood, threw back my head proudly and said dramatically:

"No power on earth shall separate me from my wife."

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed the old lady.

My reputed wife buried her face in her hands, whether because the seriousness of the matter had occurred to her or whether to conceal laughter at its absurdity I did not know.

"Do you mean to say," continued the old lady to me, "that you are married to my niece?"

There would be no use in mincing matters. I swore that I was her niece's husband.

"And you, Lois," continued the aunt—"are you really married to him?"

A faint "Yes" came from under the girl's hands.

"Well, well, well! How you two young people could have done your courting without my finding you out is remarkable. How did you manage it?"

"Love laughs at locksmiths," I said knowingly, not having any explanation ready.

"I should think so," said the aunt impressively. "How long have you been married?"

I didn't dare risk an answer to this question, fearing to be caught in a trap. I threw the burden on my bride.

"Lois, dear," I said, "tell your aunt all about it. She will be more forgiving at getting the story from one she loves. Or would you prefer sitting down with her alone and talking it all over with her?"

"I think I would like to have a little time," stammered Lois faintly.

"And I think I want the whole story this minute," cried the aunt.

"Had I not better withdraw?" I suggested. I was beginning to get very hot in the face. Confound these houses built in blocks! I'll never live in one again!

By this time Lois had thought what

answer would be less likely to sink us deeper in the mire. It occurred to her that if she said we had just been married the result in the end would be less compromising, so she told her aunt that we had been married that day at noon. She hit upon this hour because she had been away from home at that time. Then her aunt asked if we had been married by a clergyman. Lois, dreading that the old woman would pounce on the dominie, told her that we had been married by a justice of the peace.

"A justice of the peace!" exclaimed the old lady contemptuously. "Do you call that a marriage? I shall telephone for our own rector at once. If you can't be married respectably you shall at least be married religiously."

She was making for the telephone. We both clutched her.

"Madam," I cried, "permit me to say a word. I beg of you to leave me and my—your niece alone together for awhile that we may talk this matter over. These unconventional marriages are liable to bring a stain upon the parties concerned. You certainly don't wish your niece to suffer in that way, do you? Give us an hour to decide as to when and how we shall publish our union to the world."

With a sniff the old lady bounced out of the room.

The girl and I looked at each other. We would have laughed, but the affair was far too serious for mirth.

"You've got me into a terrible pickle," said Lois, much irritated.

"I? I ask a thousand!"

"Why did you say we were married? I only said we were engaged. There was a retreat from that. There is none from marriage."

"An engagement doesn't warrant a girl having a lover in a closet."

"I don't suppose it does."

"Marriage is the only thing that will excuse that."

"But how are we going to get out of it?"

"Can't you confess the whole thing? It's a splendid joke, awfully funny. Hasn't your aunt any sense of humor?"

"About as much as a cat has of poetry."

"What do you suggest?"

"I can't think of anything unless I do as you say—confess—but that would be the same thing as acknowledging criminality. Aunt Jane would never believe anything else."

"Then you can't get out of it without being smirched, at least to your aunt?"

"No, and she can never keep the secret. Others will know it. It will go everywhere. What shall I do?" She wrung her hands.

"There's another trouble in the way," I said. "She asked each of us if we admitted we were married. That in the presence of a witness makes us man and wife."

"Oh, my goodness gracious!"

There was a silence, at the end of which I said:

"I'm responsible for all this. Now let me make an admission. I have seen and admired you before, and I have said to myself, 'That's a girl I would like for my wife.' I heard your aunt refer to me as a person you had—she hung her head—'had admired. Now, suppose we let the matter rest, pledging your aunt to keep our secret till we can determine what we wish to be the outcome of this singular adventure. I will keep my home; you can keep yours. If we decide not to be man and wife we can find some way out of it with your aunt. If we wish to be married we can have a more pretentious ceremony than the one just performed."

We filed up the hour deliberating, but found no better plan than this. Then we rejoined Aunt Jane, and I acted as spokesman.

"Aunt Jane," I said—"I presume I may now call you aunt—I admit that I have done very wrong in hurrying your niece into a secret marriage, especially since my affairs are not just now in a condition that will enable me to take care of a wife in the style to which she has been accustomed. I ask a short time in which to get them in such condition, and I shall then acknowledge the marriage. As for myself, I would be willing to do this now, but Lois, whom we both love and whose reputation we are both bound to protect, thinks that we had better wait awhile, then announce an engagement and after a brief one celebrate a marriage without saying anything about the one that has occurred. Meanwhile I ask permission to visit my wife just as I would visit her with your permission to win her. I should have taken this course before. The strength of my love for her is my only excuse for not doing so. I am convinced that if she turns out to be as estimable a lady as her aunt I shall have won a treasure."

Aunt Jane gave me reason to be proud of myself for this speech by saying that it was never too late to do the right thing and she hoped I would prove myself as worthy as my words indicated.

I kissed the old lady at my departure, and my wife followed me to the door for the ostensible purpose of receiving a marital salute. I offered to avail myself of the opportunity, but Lois drew back.

I then returned to my own home, having been in the wrong house an hour and a half, during which I had married a wife to whom I had never before spoken a word and had conciliated her guardian.

I was not long winning my wife's consent to a public engagement and soon got my affairs in shape for a public wedding. When we entered the church there was not a person present who knew that the union of the contracting parties occurred from the groom having got into the wrong house.

### WOULD BE MISTAKE.

An Expert Says Unpaid Commission Would Be Sheer Folly.

"Divided responsibility is the curse of American politics," said John Z. White to an Evening News reporter last Saturday. "Instead of electing men to hire your experts, elect the experts. The essence of the commission form is the fixing of responsibility. If you are elected commissioners and hire me as an expert and something goes wrong, who is going to be held responsible by the people that hired you? You will promise to investigate just as the municipal officers of today do, and we get nowhere. You say that the advocates of the unpaid commission point to the school board, which hires its expert, as an example. The school board is an unnecessary wheel. Elect your expert and hold him responsible for your school system. The beauty of the new system is that it makes the official directly responsible; he cannot shift and evade responsibility."

"Lincoln will be making a big mistake if it adopts that idea, it is flying in the teeth of experience everywhere else. The swing of the cities of the country today is towards the commission form of government and direct legislation, and it is a mistake to halt now to try experiments. Take advantage of the wisdom gained by the experience of others."

### GENERAL MENTION.

Bright Bits Deftly Swiped From The Portland Labor Press.

"The Standard Oil crowd" are said to be the American Tobacco trust, the smelter trust, the transportation trust, and the beef trust. Organized labor must hike for the ballot box, or the combine will grab that. Some indications that the United States government is owned by the trusts.

To secure better prices for their milk, Massachusetts farmers went on strike and the legislature has an investigation committee out to report next year. Investigation committees are so helpful.

As a union buster the Leiter millionaire is a failure. This Chicago grain gambler lost two millions running an open shop coal mine. Then he quit. He violated the laws of the state, and ran a cross between a penitentiary and a military prison with guards, dead lines, cells for the "free" workmen and rules of conduct. His mine is now strictly union.

District councils of the Carpenters in San Francisco and Oakland have declared the Hearst papers unfair and will ask the American Federation of

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Labor to authorize a boycott on them. They have always been union shops and paid union wages or more. The trouble comes from the lockout of union miners in Homestead. It is doubtful if a boycott will be endorsed.

Scientific inspection shows that 28 per cent of the tenement house children in New York have tuberculosis in some form.

Congressman Miles Poindexter has written the Central Labor Council at Spokane that the demands of the striking steel workers in Pennsylvania are just and that the government should boycott the trust by doing steel work in its own yards.

At New Castle, Pa., the steel trust continues to persecute the editor of the workingman's paper there, the Free Press. Editor McKeever is a member of the city council, and exceedingly pestiferous. The trust hopes to railroad him to the pen, or induce him to leave the state.

Sawdust pudding and coffee Post has brought suit for damages to the sum of \$50,000 against the Typographical Journal, published by the International Typographical Union. When he gets through he will have a deep feeling of consanguinity for the grizzly bear that tackled a buzz-saw.

In Spokane the Building Trades have put three real estate firms and

a contractor on the unfair list for building installment houses on suburban tracts, with unfair workers and materials. There is some talk of the real estate man seeking protection for their operations through the courts.

Hereafter all the uniforms of the Vancouver, B. C. police and firemen must have the union label.

It is said that President Taft is backing a bill to give eight hours to all government employes on dredge and tugboats.

In Denver any union man seen to patronize an unfair establishment of any kind is reported to the Union Label League. The name of the informer is not made public, but must accompany the letter. The matter is investigated and if found true the name of the man or woman is reported to his or her respective union. The effect is remarkably prompt and practical.

Organized labor in Nova Scotia is demanding a law compelling employers to recognize unions and to treat with them in labor disputes.

Lumbermen and millmen in Eureka, Cal., recently refused almost to a man to turn out for a political parade, although the mill owners shut down to permit the men to march.

The Union Iron works of San Francisco has given notice of intention to

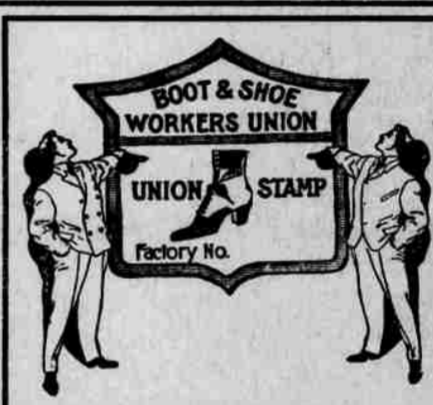
return to the nine-hour day upon the expiration of the present agreement to establish the eight-hour day on June 1. The men are now working eight and a quarter hours.

Suitcase strikers in New York City pull in a few more factories every week.

"Spotters" have been employed by street railway companies since the first mule drew one through New York City 70 years ago. They will continue to be employed until we secure municipal ownership of them and carry passengers for nothing—and that will be some time after this date.

Whenever you hear a man tell us that unions should disband and trust to the employers to do what is right, you can bet an old hat against an oyster shell that he is an employer or some idealist without practical experience.

Every union has its knockers. These gentlemen haven't time to attend meetings more than three times a year. They can orate in a bar room as to how a union should be run, and in time of strike can demand strike benefits, but they will not do committee work and they rarely read a union paper. Many of them are for sale to the politicians and to the employers, at very low figures.



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